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- 1 *Le livre noir du Colonialisme* is a monumental task successfully completed by Marc Ferro. This important work brings together a collection of historical material that allows the neophyte to acquire an informed overview of the effects of colonisation without vulgarising it. A compilation of works by researchers on different countries, the book is edited in a way that allows the reader to understand and reflect on the effects of colonisation and by the same acquire a better understanding of our present. Roughly fifty years after the major European powers retreated from the colonies, the question of colonialism continues to resurface in world politics. Marc Ferro correctly holds that colonisation did not disappear when countries acquired their independence but has merely taken on a different form. Under the guise of aid to developing countries the rich countries continue their exploitation and pillage of poorer countries. The history of colonisation is one of pain and despite the reality that physical occupation of a country by another is no longer acceptable, Marc Ferro is correct in saying that the world needs to reflect on the different forms of domination it has been experiencing since colonisation accompanied by brutality was finally declared inhuman. Meanwhile, today, as Ferro rightfully argues, aid can be interpreted as a new form of exploitation, as colonisation without occupation.
- 2 *Le livre noir du Colonialisme* includes two chapters on Apartheid in the section on the African continent. Apartheid was often compared to colonialism and there is some merit in this comparison. The disenfranchised Blacks were not treated differently from the indigenous people in the colonies. They were denied the right to participation in the affairs of their country and were treated like second-class citizens or savages. Like indigenous people in the colonies, Blacks in South Africa were dispossessed of their land, humiliated by laws restricting their social mobility and relegated to the fringes of society

for being considered inferior and therefore impure simply because their world view did not have its origins in Europe. Similarly to colonialism, Apartheid regarded and promoted Europe as the cradle of civilisation and by having attached the essence of their being to Europe, the Apartheid ideologists were like the colonists of the 16th century, describing their Other as non-European but most of all as uncivilised and barbaric. Conferring an inferior status to Blacks allowed them to advance the theory, like their white counterparts did in Australia, that South Africa was an empty land before their arrival, a *terra nullis*. South Africa the empty land had been awaiting their civilisatory mission.

- 3 To the Apartheid ideologue, the disenfranchised South Africans were inferior beings to be kept away from the Whites at all costs. It was this obsession of keeping “defiling” Blacks away from Whites that led to one of the most inhuman forms of social engineering. In its design to maintain the “purity” of the Whites, the State embarked on a mission to ascribe an ethnic identity to all South Africans. The Apartheid state put in place an elaborate bureaucratic system whose purpose was to ensure White supremacy. The result was an enormous quantity of documents that the State would use to maintain its power. The Apartheid State recorded everything to demonstrate the superiority of Whites over Blacks, that Other without a written tradition or with a written tradition not considered as valuable as theirs. In their fanatic endeavour, the proponents of Apartheid probably did not or could not imagine the demise of the *herrenvolk*. They could not envisage that these records could one day be used against them. Many of them were destroyed but some were indeed found and used by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- 4 Like colonialism, Apartheid was to end. However, in South Africa, peace was negotiated and not obtained through protracted wars. This is where the comparison with colonialism should end. The release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 signified the demise of Apartheid. All anti-Apartheid organisations were unbanned and the interim period leading to the first general elections saw different political role players negotiating a peaceful settlement to end segregation. This process of negotiation reached its zenith on 27 April 1994 when all voted as equal citizens and Nelson Mandela became the first President of democratic South Africa. This negotiated settlement changed the status of all South Africans from hierarchically and racially different to politically equal. The most inhuman of societies in the world as South Africa was labeled became a celebrated icon of hope. The negotiated settlement made the prospect of peace a fragile commodity which could only succeed if all citizens prescribed to it and participated in it. It was this aspect that marked a fundamental change in establishing a democratic society built on the principles of inclusion. To ensure this, the South African post-Apartheid Constitution put the individual at its centre and established a forum where ordinary persons could participate in writing the future.
- 5 Among its many tasks, this first democratically elected government had to find ways of redressing the wrongs of Apartheid and was expected to somehow deal with the pain and atrocities of the past. It created a legitimate space where individuals could ask questions about loved ones hurt, maimed or killed during the struggle against Apartheid or to maintain the regime. This was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission created by Nelson Mandela’s government and chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Dealing with the cruelties of the Apartheid state was a fundamental step in the ideological process of nation-building and was necessary to concretely undo the wrongs of the previous regime. In this process, Blacks were to be given back their dignity. The democratic State had a fundamental obligation to all citizens in the way it established different platforms for

dealing with the moral and concrete issues of redressment in the country. Insofar as moral issues were concerned, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was introduced to deal with questions related to the symbolic value of building the nation's memory. The Commission became a space where the nation's wounds were exposed and where the concepts of truth and reconciliation were debated as efforts demonstrating the accountability and transparency of the present government as opposed to the authoritarian rule of the Apartheid regime.

- 6 Post-colonial nations have tended to neglect the importance of recording the pain and suffering of its people under colonial rule. South Africa drew from the knowledge of this lacuna and tried to address this by making the experience and suffering of its people the focus of its social reconstruction effort. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (trc) facilitated an individual perspective of the violence the Apartheid state had inflicted on many. The Commission placed an emphasis on the creation of a space for ordinary South Africans to tell their stories of pain, suffering and deprivation under the previous regime. It was also an attempt to record the past, to write an inclusive history of the country and, most important of all, to promote reconciliation between people who, in segregated South Africa, were not destined to meet, let alone share the pain. The Commission heard two kinds of submissions relating to violence and trauma. It heard submissions by individuals who had lost loved ones on one hand and on the other, heard how violence against many ordinary people was a highly organized affair. It was this orchestrated and institutionalized form of cruelty and violence that was incarnated by Eugene de Kock and *Vlakplaas*, one of the darkest and most secret episodes of South Africa's past.
- 7 If the records of the trc are regarded as the first step towards the writing of the history of South Africa and towards ensuring that the atrocities of the past remain in the past, they also are the first steps towards reparations and in this regard, it is important that a *livre noir de l'Apartheid* be written some day in the near future. It would be a pertinent complement to *Le livre noir du colonialisme* as a reminder of human suffering never to be repeated.